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AFTER DINNER SPEECH

BY

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TO THE FRIENDLY SONS OF ST. PATRICK

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May it please Your Eminence, Cardinal Cooke;

Your Excellency, Archbishop Maguire;

Your Excellency, Governor Wilson;

Your Honor, Mayor Koch;

Reverend Sirs;

Honored Guests on the dais;

Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick and Friends of

Friendly Sons, distinguished, extinguished,

about to be extinguished, and otherwise:

Thank you, President Tom Coleman for the kind words you have said about me.

I am well aware of the distinction associated with appearing before this audience on this sparkling occasion. But I have to confess that I have no business being here in this shrine of oratory.

It is well known throughout the banquet halls of America that I am an inveterate and unregenerate mumbler. In fact, they sometimes don't even bother to give me a mike.

My appointment was widely hailed as part of Ronald Reagan's economy program. It was said that for the first time it will not be

necessary to provide the Director of Central Intelligence with a scrambler telephone.

When I received your invitation I was most reluctant to invite comparisons with oratorical giants like Owen McGivern, the Bard of Rockefeller Center, Judge Mulligan, the sage of Foley Square, Malcolm Wilson who flunked me off the Fordham debating team, and other shouters and thumpers who have appeared before you. Yet, I've thrown aside these hesitations because I felt that, as the professional descendant of Hercules Mulligan, one of the founders of this ancient organization, and George Washington's personal intelligence advisor, it was my duty to appear at this 197th annual dinner as my great predecessor, Hercules, appeared at your first rousing dinner in 1784.

As most of you know, Hercules was a young tailor who plucked secrets from British officers as he measured them for uniforms in British occupied New York and smuggled them to Washington's headquarters in New Jersey by devious and circuitous routes running across Long Island Sound and the Hudson River.

One notable chronicler has been Judge William Hughes Mulligan, who copped a plea by declaring himself a non-descendant of Hercules Mulligan.

We owe to Judge William Hughes Mulligan the recognition, today widely accepted, that it was not Nathan Hale but the Irish tailor, Mulligan, who was the intelligence hero of the American Revolution.

We Irish are too frequently deprived of the credit due us. When the CIA headquarters were built in Langley, Virginia, Allen Dulles, I

believe he was of Welsh descent, had a statue of Nathan Hale erected to inspire American intelligence officers. I think we can do better than Nathan Hale. It is not so much that Nathan Hale is of British descent. What is important is that Nathan Hale got caught. In contrast, Hercules Mulligan kept delivering secrets until the British went home. He never broke his cover to the end. Today he still lies, well covered, in Trinity Churchyard, no doubt spying on his Protestant neighbors. Hercules Mulligan, not Nathan Hale, is the example we want to emulate. I intend to speak to the grounds committee about it when I return to Langley tomorrow.

There's something else I intend to do as part of my program to shake up the CIA. We are overwhelmed by the facts and other bits of information that come pouring in. The trick is to piece them together and arrive at a reliable conclusion. I intend to require every analyst and report writer in the place to study as a model of arriving at a correct conclusion from scattered and apparently unrelated facts, the intelligence assessments which Judge Mulligan has produced for this Society. These assessments proved, beyond peradventure of doubt, that it was not Columbus but rather an Irish navigator named Lynch who discovered America and that it was Irish engineers led by a man named O'Hanlon, using a mixture of Connemara stone and Egyptian sand, and not the Egyptians, who built the pyramids. How many investigative reporters would envy his subsidiary finding that it is the descendants of these Celtic builders, some of them, like Lynch, having adopted Italian names, who dominate the stone and sand business in New York today.

To maintain the tradition of these dinners as the place where great truths are revealed -- fitting proof, perhaps, of the Latin saying "in vino veritas" -- I have a revelation which may startle you.

Most of you know that I was principally responsible for Ronald Reagan's election victory last November.

But what you don't know -- because he won't admit it -- is that I am also one of Ed Koch's political advisors. He asked my advice the other day on his re-election campaign. "Bill", he said, "I've been called O'Koch at Irish occasions. I'm after the Italian vote too. Do you think I could get away with O'Kochio?"

I said, "Ed, you're trying too hard. There's an easier way. Just pick yourself the right opponent. You know, like Nelson did it -- Frank O'Connor -- Bob Morgenthau -- Arthur Goldberg." Then I told him how, last November, after the votes were in, Jimmy Carter called Ronald Reagan to congratulate him. Jimmy was a pretty good loser. He said, "Ronnie, is there anything I can do for you?" Reagan said, "Yes, run against me in 1984."

Well, time is slipping away. I must finish up, see some old friends, and shake a few hands, even if it means that I return to Washington with the resumes of a lot of in-laws and poor relatives. Whoever said blood is thicker than water? That wasn't in the Bible. I contend that it was thought up by poor relatives.

The fact is that I am up here on a talent hunt.

As you know, we have a lot of jobs still open in the Reagan Administration and we want to get some New Yorkers down to Washington. Cap Weinberger, for example, asked me to look out for some men who'll get the military interested in winning again.

So I'm very anxious to tell Wellington Mara we've got a commission for him.

I'd also like to get the word around that we could find a place on the Labor Relations Board for George Steinbrenner.

I think it was Will Rogers who said every man is entitled to a native land whether he was born there or not. On St. Patrick's Day at the Friendly Sons, we're all Irishmen for a night.

On this day we celebrate, we are stirred by the glory of our history. In those dark years, when Europe was overrun by the barbarians who sprang out of the east, Irish saints and scholars kept alive the flame of Christian civilization and culture. There followed the peaceful invasion of Europe as Ireland sent its sons to rekindle that flame in other lands. They made one mistake in foreign policy which was to haunt the Irish for a thousand years. They taught the English how to read and write.

After Lynch discovered the new world, Irish sons and daughters followed. When our country launched itself with the Declaration of Independence, 13 of the signers were Irish.

It was said in the British Parliament that 50% of Washington's Army was Irish. Actually it was only 38%, but the redcoats, for some reason, thought it was more. And then came the thousands upon thousands who built our Catholic churches and schools and universities all over the land. Some of them even got to California. And today one of them has come back east to bring clarity and principle, courage and laughter to the nation's capitol again.

According to The Washington Post, records in London show that Ronald Reagan's great grandfather, called Michael O'Reagan, married Katherine Mulcahy in Ballyporeen, County Tipperary, on October 31, 1852. Genealogical researchers already claim to have established a firm link between the President and Brian Boru, the 11th century warrior king of all Ireland.

All of us Irishmen, especially on the occasion of these dinners, boast that we are descendants of kings.

We are indeed descendants of kings -- and of queens, too.

Their castles were thatched huts in the hills of Wicklow or small weatherbeaten houses on Galway's rocky west coast.

Their wealth did not consist of gold and precious jewels -- but rather of song and stories and laughter -- of courage -- of fiery passion for liberty and freedom -- and of unshakeable faith in God.

More of their progeny arrived here in New York, at Ellis Island, than all of the Irish living on that Emerald Isle today.

Today, in the United States there are some 30 million people bearing Celtic names. Most of them never heard of Tara's hill. Few of them ever walked through the valley of Tralee or saw the sun go down over Galway Bay. Many of them can't even bless themselves with their right hand, let alone genuflect with their right knee. And yet, every year on March 17th every community in the land, suddenly, becomes aware of the people with Celtic names in their midst.

On that day, the American Irish share their warm hearts, their humor, their laughter, their Irish whiskey and all those qualities that make America a grander, a brighter, a freer and a much noisier place to live.

Even more important to this nation at this time is the fact that we Irish have always stood for something. Today, when voices say God is dead, the American Irish remain one of the few, one of the very few groups left in this nation today, who still stand for a rigid belief in God, in the conviction there will be a life hereafter, in the Apostle's Creed, in a Ten Commandments that will not budge, in moral values that never change. They hold to the belief that some things are right and some things are wrong, eternally right and eternally wrong. They have above all a sublime realization that this life in its loftiest and most exhilarating moments, and all of this world's pageantry is but a trinket when compared with our eternal destiny. And they still cling to a pristine faith first given to their ancestors over 1500 years ago when at Tara the

holy Patrick first lit the paschal fires on the hills of Slain and they still cling to their heritage of faith and of spirituality and of eternal principles and they cling to that heritage with a stamina and a tenacity not unworthy of their ancestors, those ancestors who endured the long occupation and the great famine. And let us hope tonight that this heritage of eternal principles in no small measure preserved and kept alive in the United States by Americans of Irish ancestry will remain in this nation until the end, until that last day when they call the roll up yonder and the Irish Saints come marching in.

May God make us worthy of our heritage!!